

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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UNCLAS QUEBEC 0196

E.O.: 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: TRUDEAU CONSIDERS HIS POSITION AND THAT OF HIS PARTY
IN BY-ELECTIONS

1. IN A QUEBEC PRESS CONFERENCE 19 MAY, PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU TOLD REPORTERS THAT IT WAS HIS POSITION IN HIS PARTY AND THE PARTY S POSITION IN COMMONS WHICH WILL BE AT STAKE IN BY-ELECTIONS MAY WRM HE WENT SO FAR AS TO RESURRECT BRIEFLY, IF DELICATELY, THE LARGELY DISCREDITED IDEA THAT ELECTION WAS A MINI REFERENDUM ON FEDERALISM VS SEPARATISM. TRUDEAU SAID HE WAS PARTICIPATING ACTIVELY IN FINAL SPURT BECAUSE HE FEARS. THAT IF RESULTS ARE NEGATIVE FOR HIS CAUSE, ELECTION WILL BE INTEPRETED IN MANY CORNERS AS A PLEBISCITE AGAINST TRUDEAU AND HIS PARTY. MY PERSONAL POPULARITY WILL BE JUDGED ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS, HENCE IT IS BETTER THAT I INVOLVE MYSELF IN THEM.

2. TRUDEAU ALSO USED PRESS CONFERENCE TO CORRECT PREVIOUS IMPRESSIONS OF RIGIDITY ON HIS PART VIS-A-VIS RECENT NEW GOQ PROPOSALS FOR DIVIDING POWERS IN THE IMMIGRATION FIELD. PM SAID HE WAS READY TO REVIEW EXISTING OTTAWA-QUEBEC AGREEMENTS, TO IN-

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CREASE THE ADMINISTRATIVE FLEXABILITY OF IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS SO QUEBEC COULD EXERCISE ALL ITS CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS IN SELECTION OF IMMIGRANTS, AND EVEN TO CONSIDER CONSTITUIONAL CHANGES IF NECESSARY. PRESS HAD PREVIOUSLY QUOTED PM AS REJECTING CATEGORICALLY SUGGESTIONS BY QUEBEC IMMIGRATION MINISTER JACQUES COUTURE. TRUDEAU INSISTED ON HIS WILLIGNESS TO CONSIDER ANY QUEBEC PROPOSALS WITH AN OPEN MIND BUT UNDERLINED THAT GOC

MUST HAVE FINAL VETO POWER ON ANY UNDESIRABLE IMMIGRANTS.

3. TRUDEAU S VISIT TO QUEBEC CITY S LANGELIER AND LOUIS HEBERT S RIDING APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN GREAT SUCCESS. HE ATTRACTED LARGE, BOISTROUS CROWD TO MID-DAY DEBATE AT LAVAL UNIVERSITY AND MORE THAN HELD HIS OWN AGAINST ENTHUSIASTIC, BUT OFTEN LESS THAN WELL INFORMED STUDENT PQ SYMPATHIZERS. CROWD OF OVER 1000 APPEARED 50 PERCENT FAVORABLE, 50 PERCENT UNFAVORABLE TO PM WHO USED OCCASION TO AGAIN EXPRESS HIS OPPOSITION TO ETHNOCENTRIC NATIONALISMS. PRESS SURVEYS INDICATE FEW STUDENTS WILL VOTE BUT DEBATE GAVE PM GOOD EXPOSURE IN LOUIS HEBERT RIDING. FROM THERE, TRUDEAU WENT TO ROUND OF SHOPPING CENTER VISITS WHERE A MILD FORM OF TRUDEAUMONIA REAPPEARED AS TRUDEAU CAMPAIGNED AMONG LARGE, FRIENDLY CROWDS. HE WAS ESCORTED THROUGHOUT THE DAY BY LOCAL LIBERAL CANDIDATES DENIS DAWSON(LOUIS HEBERT) AND GILLES LAMONTAGNE (LANGELIER).

4. GIVEN RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, TRUDEAU MAY HAVE EXAGGERATED SOMEWHAT THE EFFECT ELECTIONS COULD HAVE ON HIM AND HIS PARTY. NONETHELESS HIS VISIT GAVE LIBERALS BIG CAMPAIGN BOOST LOCALLY AT AN OPPURTUNE TIME. WHILE LIBERALS ARE EXPECTED TO WIN BOTH CONTESTS, LOCAL PARTY OFFICIALS REMAIN APPREHENSIVE. THE ELECTION OF THE PQ GOVERNMENT IN NOVEMBER HAS GIVEN THESE ELECTIONS MORE IMPORTANCE THAN NORMAL BUT LOCAL LIBERALS STILL CANNOT FORGET THAT VOTERS OFTEN USE BYELECTIONS AS CHANCE TO PROTEST AGAINST GOVERNMENT IN POWER WITHOUT RISK OF DEFEATING THAT GOVERNMENT. THUS BYELECTIONS OFTEN PRODUCE SURPRISES. INTENTIONS OF THOSE WHO VOTED PQ LAST NOV. 15 REMAINS AN UNKNOWN AS WELL. ALSO ADDING TO FEAR OF PARTY OFFICIALS IS THE UNEXPECTED UNCLASSIFIED

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INTENSITY OF CRITICISM IN LANGELIER OF MAYOR LAMONTAGNE S 12 YEAR RECORD IN CITY HALL. AS A RESULT OF THIS CRITICISM, SOME LIBERALS NOW FEEL THAT MAYOR MAY HAVE TIGHTER RACE THAN DAWSON. NOTWITHSTANDING THESE OBSERVATIONS BY PARTY OFFICIALS, ALL ANALYSTS STILL FEEL WEIGHT OF LIBERAL MACHINE COUPLED WITH POPULARITY OF TRUDEAU-DEMONSTRATED ONCE AGAIN YESTERDAY-WILL PRODUCE TWO LIBERAL VICTORIES IN QUEBEC CITY. GARLAND

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